



CHAPTER 3: URBAN DESIGN PLAN

Introduction

While the Circulation and Parking Plan establish the framework, or infrastructure, for improvements in Downtown, the Urban Design Plan is the final layer that preserves and enhances the sense of place and character for Downtown and strengthens the environment for pedestrians. Without these important design elements, comfort and appeal is lost and the circulation and parking improvements cannot be effective.

Key Findings

Upon careful analysis and observation of the Downtown, the following were determined to be prevailing issues:



- There is a lack of separation between the pedestrian environment and the vehicle realm which can jeopardize the perception of safety for pedestrians.
- There is a need for additional amenities for pedestrians that promote long visits and return visits.
- For visitors entering the Downtown by vehicle, there is directional confusion due to poor lane markings, one-way streets, and poor signage.
- Downtown lacks a strong message of its overriding design theme, or character.
- Parking lots do not offer enhancements and design elements that encourage use.
- Outlying parking areas lack connections to the sidewalk system and businesses.
- Wide street crossings and narrow sidewalks are unwelcoming for pedestrians.
- Downtown lacks way-finding to points of interest.
- Dramatic entranceway treatment is needed to announce arrival into Downtown.
- There are significant historical sites and structures to preserve and showcase.
- There are several underutilized sites and buildings within Downtown.



Urban Design Objectives

To address these issues the following priority objectives were established to serve as a foundation for the Urban Design Plan:

- Upgrade streetscape design elements to create interest and comfort.
- Create exclusive areas for public gatherings and pedestrians.
- Improve way-finding within the Downtown.
- Increase accessibility and upgrade the appearance of parking areas.

Urban Plan

Figure 11 provides an illustrated Urban Plan that sets forth a vision for accomplishing the Plan Objectives. The key concepts of this plan are numbered on the graphic and labeled by the following categories. A more detailed description of each concept is provided below.

Major Gateways: Major gateways, or entry points, are indicated at the following intersections because they are designated to be the prime entrance routes into Downtown:

- Robinson Court and Main Street (Route 55).
- Joliet Street (Route 231) and East Street.
- Walnut Street and Main Street (Route 55).
- Joliet Street (Route 231) and West Street.

Those main entrances are important because they offer the opportunity to announce arrival into Downtown, to express the character and charm of Downtown, and establish a sense of place for the traveler.

Possible treatment at these major gateways could include a number of simple treatments that will alert a driver. Examples include a change in pavement such as brick pavers or colored concrete; a welcome sign that incorporates a common design or 'branding' for the Downtown, and landscaping for color and interest. Major gateway signs are also recommended in the Downtown Sign section of this Chapter.

Key Redevelopment Opportunities: Key redevelopment opportunities were identified in a few locations around Downtown. These redevelopment opportunities will increase the economic base for Downtown.



Specific locations are described below:

- Infill near Main Street (Route 55) and Robinson Court: There are two sites near this intersection that are identified as key redevelopment opportunities. Currently the structures on the site do not blend with the historic and connected façade of the other downtown buildings on Main Street (Route 55). In addition, the small scale of current development does not maximize the potential for the site. New development in these locations should maximize use of the site and naturally blend with the Downtown character of adjoining buildings to the south.
- New Development Site at Gateway: The corner of Joliet Street (Route 231) and East Street is a major gateway into the Downtown. Unfortunately, the current impression at this intersection is of a suburban bank, drive-through teller, and parking lots. This impression is contrary to the historic and charming downtown character that is found merely 200 feet away on Main Street (Route 55) and Joliet Street (Route 231). In order to reflect a more accurate impression of Downtown Crown Point at this gateway, the parking lot should be developed with a mixed-use structure with a design consistent with Downtown buildings. It is also recommended that the stand alone bank drive-through facility be relocated southeast of the intersection where it is still easily accessible but less prominently situated. The corner should be landscaped.
- In-fill and Reuse near Walnut Street and Main Street (Route 55): In-fill development and reuse of valuable historic structures are recommended in three locations near this intersection. While offset from the Square, there are thriving businesses and uses that have become an extension of Downtown and can be emphasized by additional reinvestment in these three redevelopment locations. The focus in this area should be preserving the historic character and ensuring new development blends with the adjoining residential neighborhood.
- New Development on Joliet Re-Alignment: If the re-alignment of Joliet Street (Route 231) occurs, new street frontage is created that presents significant new development potential immediately west of Court Street. Similar to the Joliet Street (Route 231) and East Street intersection, this area is also a major gateway to Downtown and should establish a consistent



image upon entrance. Use of the structures can be mixed commercial, office, and residential.



Example of consistent downtown building facades

Specific building design guidelines for these sites are as follows:

- Building height must match that of adjoining structures and in most cases should be a minimum of 2 or 3 stories.
- Corner buildings around the Square should possess prominent design elements that make a visual statement in the core of Downtown. Examples include cupolas, additional stories, or archways.
- Corner buildings on the outer edges of Downtown such as at Main Street (Route 55) and Walnut Street or Joliet Street (Route 231) and East Street, should be more subtle and not overwhelm adjoining residential uses. For example, multiple story buildings should be tiered and set back from the road with a courtyard or open space area. (See the southeast corner of Main Street (55) and Joliet Street (231) of Figure 11 Urban Plan for an example of the courtyard concept).
- Building materials must be of high quality, durable and long lasting, and coordinate with existing historic structures. These materials must be used on all sides visible to the public.
- First floor windows must dominate the front façade to create interest for pedestrians and to display goods and services. Upper story windows should replicate window intervals, sizes, and proportion of adjoining buildings.
- Front entrances must have prominent design features at the street front such as embellished doorways, awnings and architectural details.
- A mixtures of uses within buildings is encouraged with commercial businesses on the main floor and office and residential above to maintain a shopping and restaurant presence along the street front.



Example of a pedestrian-friendly intersection

Pedestrian Improved Intersection: An inviting pedestrian environment is crucial to a successful Downtown because the more comfortable pedestrians feel, the longer they stay and the more likely they are to return. There are several recommendations that will improve the pedestrian environment described in the circulation and parking plan (Chapter 2). As part of the Urban Plan, however, the focus is on increased safety and comfort for pedestrians crossing the street. To accomplish this objective, there are a number of crosswalks illustrated on the Plan at intersections and mid-block for more direct accessibility. More specific improvements at these crosswalks could include:

- A change in pavement or striping to define the pedestrian realm at intersections and mid-block crossings.
- Install curb extensions at corners to enlarge pedestrian gathering areas and reduce street crossing distance. (See Figure 12 and the corresponding discussion for more detail)
- Existing pedestrian activated crossing signals must remain and where they are not offered, signage should be installed that alert drivers of pedestrian crossings and to yield to pedestrians.

New Public Parking: While the preferred design plan accommodates ample on-street parking and recommends improved enforcement of employee parking habits, new areas for public parking are proposed. Some of the parking recommendations require acquisition or swapping of land and demolition of buildings, but as Downtown continues to thrive, more parking will be necessary and resources are more likely to be available through public/private partnerships.



Improve Existing Public Parking: To increase use of off-street parking lots, improvements are recommended to key public lots as noted on the Urban Plan. Improvements should include the following elements (as illustrated in Figure 10):

- Landscape islands with shade trees to incorporate greenspace and guide vehicles.
- Streetwalls or hedge rows along the front yards to screen parked cars from public view.
- Decorative, low impact, lighting for safety.
- Easily identifiable signs in accordance with the public sign plan to ensure easy wayfinding.
- Parking lot surface coating and parking stall re-striping to maximize use of site.
- Ample pedestrian connections between parking areas, the existing sidewalk network, and Downtown.



Figure 10: Public Parking Lot Improvements



Municipal Use: A long term redevelopment concept is proposed that would create a landmark, public attraction and gathering area for Downtown at the intersection of East Street and Clark Street. Potential improvements include consolidating City departments to one location, new building construction, demolition of existing buildings, and site enhancements such as courtyard space and landscaping.



Example of a shared use alley

Pedestrian Improved Alley: Enhancements to key alleys are proposed to increase pedestrian use. These are excellent opportunities to link pedestrians between parking and Downtown. Locations include along Hack Court, the existing alleys parallel to Main Street (Route 55) on both sides, and Parry Court. Improvements to alleys should include:

- Create a shared yet defined space between vehicle and pedestrian through a raised sidewalk and possible bollards.
- Incorporate comfortable and unique elements to extend the public realm such as a continuation of the streetscape including directional signage and lighting and providing street furniture and public art.
- Take advantage of additional space for outdoor seating.
- Provide lighting that is decorative but reinforces safety.
- Change pavement treatment that defines the space and keeps vehicle speeds low such as brick pavers or colored concrete.



Urban Plan

1. Major Gateway
2. Key Redevelopment Opportunities
3. Pedestrian-Improved Intersection
4. New Public Parking
5. Improved Existing Public Parking
6. Municipal Use
7. Pedestrian-Improved "Alley"

Alternative Plan

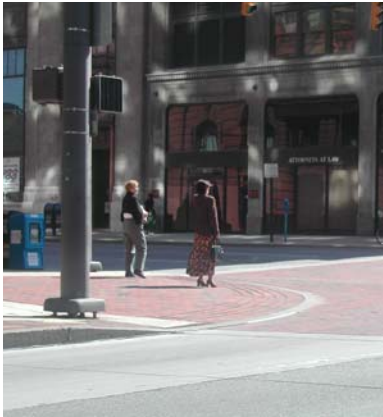


Figure 11: Urban Plan



Streetscape Improvements

Simple improvements to the streetscape will significantly improve the pedestrian environment and further emphasize the character of Downtown. The adjoining graphics (Figures 12, 13, 14, and 15) provide sample details for improvements throughout Downtown.



Typical Intersection Improvements: As illustrated in Figure 12, intersection improvements include curb extensions, accessibility ramps, crosswalk striping, underground storm system structure extensions, improved signage, and pedestrian scale light fixtures.

Curb extensions at corners are recommended because they create a larger, safer pedestrian area for gathering. The curb extension reduces the length of time a pedestrian has to walk across traffic lanes which reduces accident potential and increases the feeling of safety. There is also ample space to create barrier-free accessibility with inclined approaches and textural pavement changes. Curb extensions have been successfully applied in many downtowns. Specifically in Indiana, they are on downtown Highland on Highway Avenue and in downtown Valparaiso on Lincoln Way.

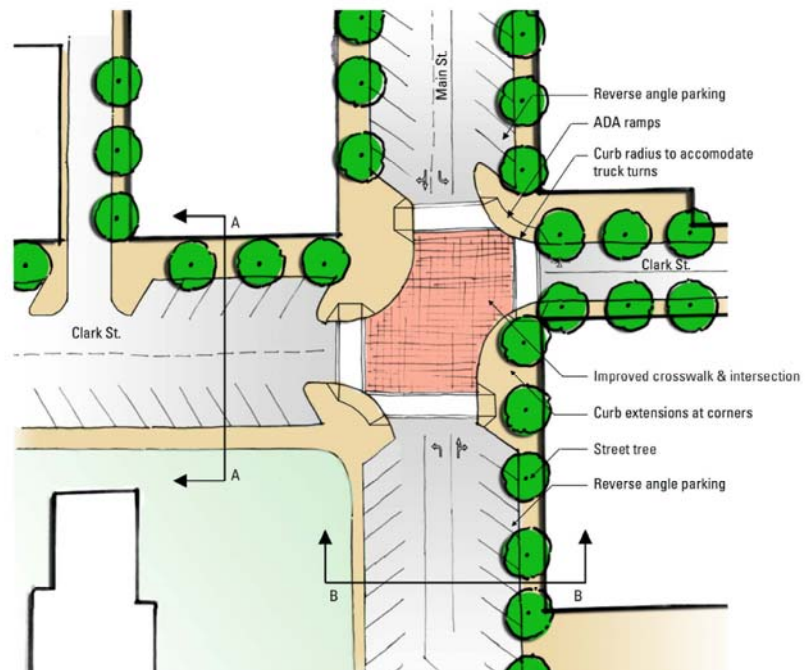


Figure 12: Typical Intersection Detail



Because of potential conflicts with trucks, further study will be needed to determine whether curb extensions will have a raised curb or is flush with the street. If flush with the street, other treatment should be incorporated to maintain a definitive separation between pedestrians and traffic, such as bollards.



Typical Streetscape Improvement: Figure 13 provides a closer image of the sidewalk environment that illustrates how the streetscape should be improved in Downtown and an example photograph in an urban context.

The sidewalk can be divided into three zones:

- The clear zone, adjacent to the street, provides a clear space for parked vehicles to overhang and for appropriate street signage.
- The amenity zone provides separation between the main flow of pedestrians and the street. This area incorporates street trees, lighting, benches, and other amenities.
- The pedestrian zone is the primary space dedicated for pedestrian traffic. In addition, this zone allows for outdoor seating, pedestrian scale business signs, and awnings.

These 'human-scale' elements improve the personal experience for people walking along the sidewalk and are recommended throughout Downtown Crown Point.

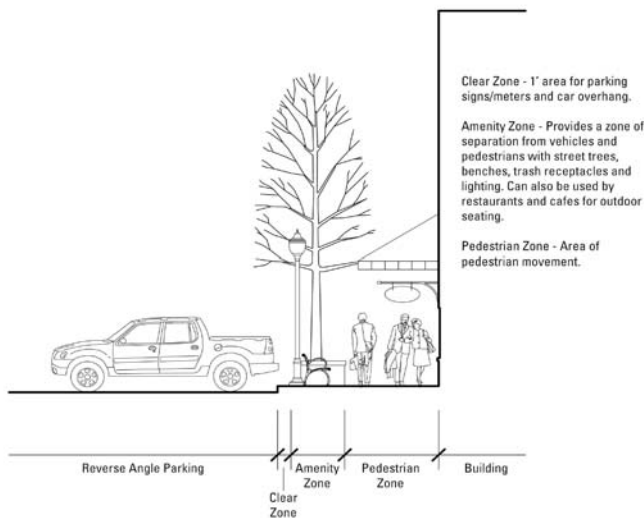
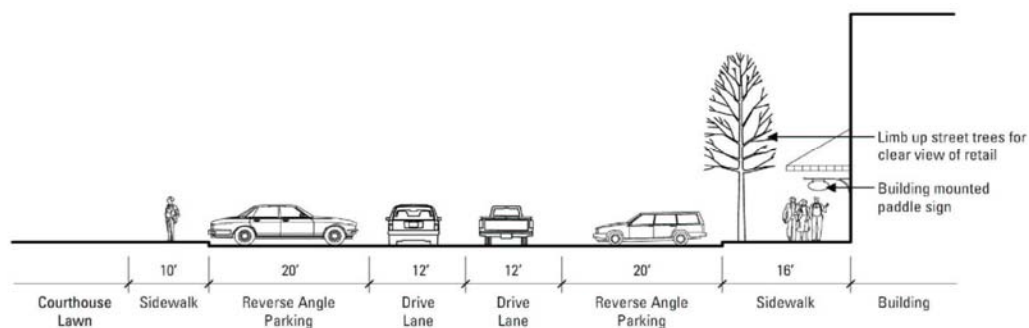


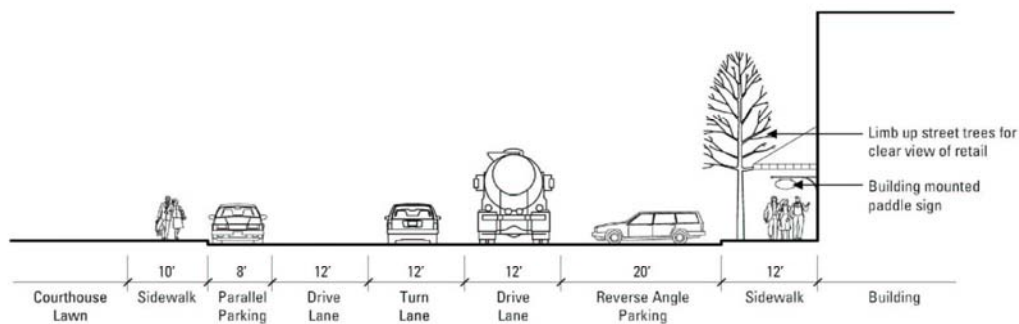
Figure 13: Typical Streetscape Improvement



Typical Cross Section Detail. Figure 14 provides a cross section detail with recommended dimensions for the full streetscape throughout Downtown. While the width of parking and travel lanes may vary, on-street parking, street trees, and a minimum 12 foot wide sidewalk are recommended. In most cases, buildings should have a zero lot line, or very shallow, setback though some deeper setbacks may be appropriate to accommodate plazas, outdoor seating, or clear sight corner distance at un-signalized intersections.



Section A-A



Section B-B

Figure 14: Typical Street Cross Section



Streetscape Perspective. Figure 15 provides a potential streetscape perspective in Crown Point that illustrates many of the recommended streetscape and signage improvements contained in this Chapter.



Figure 15: Streetscape Perspective Sketch



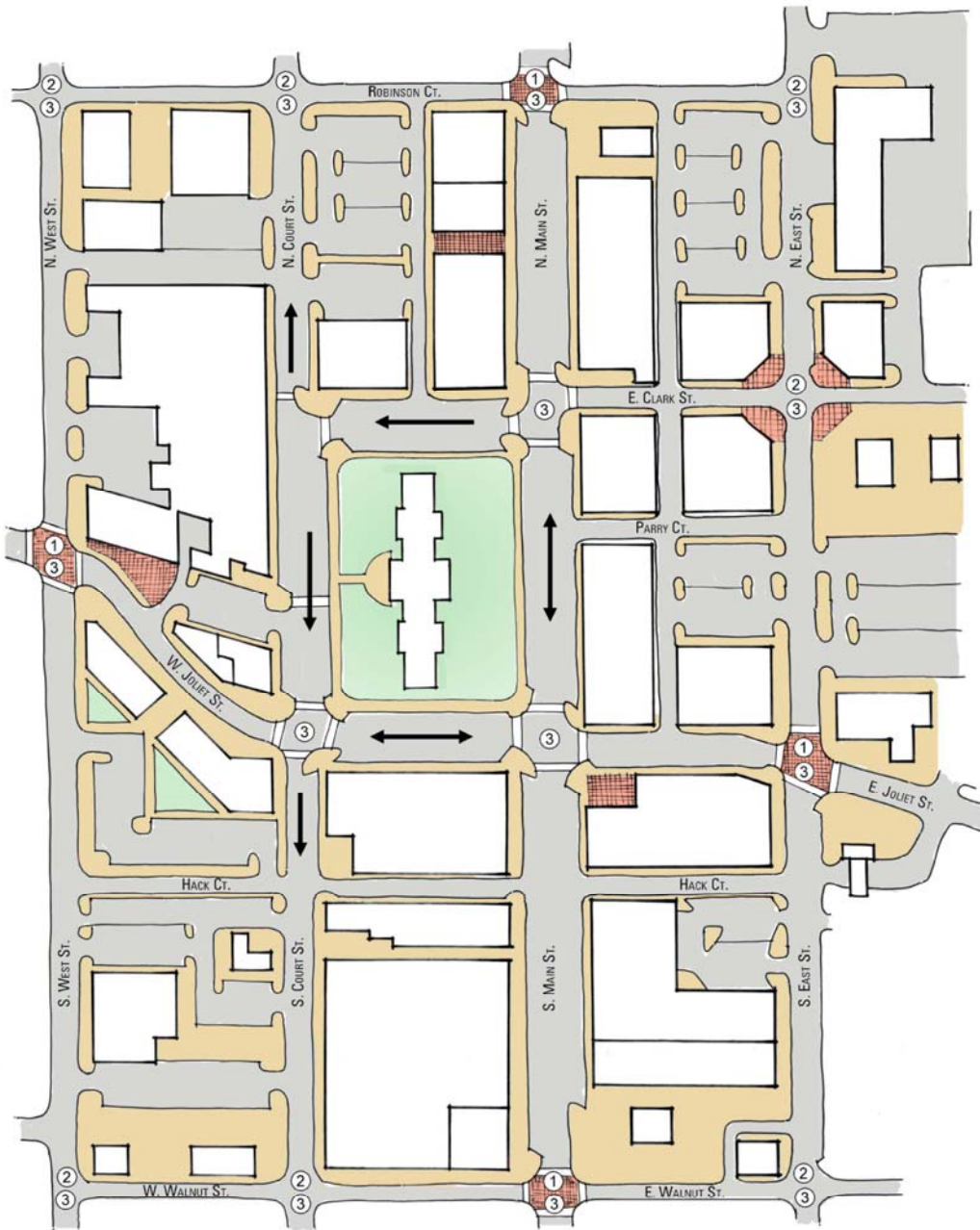
Downtown Signs

Signs have a profound effect on the visual impression and character of a community. They can enhance its quality and charm or detract from a welcoming environment. A comprehensive approach to sign planning is needed. Two components discussed in this plan are public signs, such as gateway and directional signs, and business signs for individual stores and other Downtown uses.

Public Signs: A consistent public sign system is recommended to contribute to the 'branding' of Downtown. The same theme should be used for all non-regulatory public signs to unify Downtown. This will also prevent the appearance of clutter that can occur when there are multiple public signs of different colors, shapes, and sizes. State route markers, speed limit and regulatory signs must still meet the requirements of the Uniform Traffic Control Manual but some can be placed within a more uniform sign form.

The recommended sign system includes three public sign types. Figure 16 provides geographical reference for each sign type and Figure 17 offers examples of these different sign types:

- **Major Gateway Signs:** These are located at the key gateways on Main Street (Route 55) and Joliet Street (Route 231). These signs should be dramatic, with landscaping and special pavement to alert the driver. An archway is recommended as a vertical element. An example of the archway is provided in Figure 17 but the City should pursue a design that is unique to the community and involves public input. One recommendation suggested by the Steering Committee is to conduct a local contest to select the final design.
- **Minor Gateway Signs:** These are located at other, less traveled entrance routes to Downtown on West Street, East Street, Court Street, and Clark Street. While these should be consistent in design to the major gateway signs, minor gateway signs should be of a smaller scale (see Figure 17).
- **Directional Signs:** These would be located throughout Downtown to direct vehicular traffic to destinations and parking. This category also includes directional signs such as street identification, stop signs and traffic regulations (see Figure 17). These can be attached to existing light poles or where none exist, placed on a new pole of similar character.



Signage Location Plan

- 1. Major Gateway Sign
- 2. Minor Gateway Sign
- 3. Directional Sign

Figure 16: Signage Location Plan



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Example downtown signs

Business Signs: The forms, shapes, sizes and colors of businesses signs can severely detract from the character of the Downtown because people's attention will be drawn to the signs, not the architecture of the building or to the pleasant streetscape. In addition, business signs in a downtown require a different design approach because they must have a pedestrian-orientation and should also be compatible with the historic character. Because of these specialized needs, separate business sign regulations should be developed that apply only to Downtown Crown Point. While these regulations should be very specific, generally, Downtown business signs should follow these guidelines:

- The size and height of signs should be pedestrian in scale but should also be visible to slow moving vehicular traffic.
- Storefront signs should enhance buildings rather than overwhelm them. Signs should complement the architecture and be integrated into the facade design such as the first story.
- Illumination of signs should be limited to external means such as decorative down-directed lighting.
- Sign types encouraged include wall signs, projecting/paddle signs, and window signs. Temporary sandwich board signs can add to the pedestrian environment if placed properly and regulated to ensure they do not become a nuisance. Rooftop signs, billboards and signs should be prohibited that are attached to rocks, trees, poles, benches, and trash receptacles.
- Projecting clocks or special architectural features are also encouraged, but at a pedestrian scale.